



A New Mexico Beekeeper in Texas

Megan Mahoney

I miss the green chile in New Mexico. I miss the purple sage honey. I miss watching the Sandias turn pink at sunset. I miss having my own hives in the back yard next to an irrigation ditch. Perhaps one of the things I miss the most is the bee community/culture there! I grew up in Albuquerque's South Valley, an area strongly built around and influenced by agriculture. For quite a few years I had bees in the area (still have a few!) and got to know the back roads by catching swarms, removing feral colonies, and scouting out bee yards among blooming alfalfa fields and cottonwood-lined ditch banks.

Over the course of my more than decade-long love of bees, I have taken many and almost any opportunity relating to bees that I've been able to. I've been fortunate enough to meet amazing beekeepers (and their bees) all over the country and in other parts of the world. I've seen the California Central Valley turn whitish pink with billions of almond blossoms, bee trucks and forklifts taking up every available space in hotel parking lots. I've experienced the absolute emptiness of the prairie pothole regions of the northern plains, beehives stacked up to look like little city skylines against the fields of clover. I've watched in wonder while "mating comets" nearly the size of soccer balls dance through the sky above the queen bee mating yards. I've learned how to identify and gather wicker to weave top-bar hives in Jamaica.

Most recently, I've witnessed alligators swimming through flooded areas that used to be dependably dry bee yards in South East Texas. I've just taken a new job, working for Texas A&M University, as part of a larger, national, non-profit program called the Bee Informed Partnership. The Bee Informed Partnership was founded five years ago with the idea of bridging the gap between academia/research and beekeepers. It is a "boots on the ground" approach modeled after crop consultation and extension services to use "beekeepers' real world experience to solve beekeepers' real world problems." The areas that Bee Informed

Photo: John Denne

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SAVE THE DATE!

January 5-9, 2016

**American Honey Producers Association
2016 Annual Convention and Trade Show**
Albuquerque, NM

February 5-6, 2016

NMBKA Annual Conference
Albuquerque, NM

THE NEW MEXICO BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

is dedicated to informing and inspiring persons interested in beekeeping, and educating the general public.

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Message from The President

Looking back on this year, I feel beyond blessed to have met so many incredible people in the course of my duties as president of the New Mexico Beekeepers Association. I also feel proud that we have continued to make strides towards ensuring that NMBKA truly represents the diverse voices of New Mexico's beekeepers. Here are some highlights from 2015:

- At the beginning of this year, the NMBKA officially became a nonprofit.
- Thanks to a grant awarded to the NMBKA for education and outreach, our top-notch team of beekeeping teachers was able to travel to Alamogordo, Farmington, Los Lunas and Silver City to meet beekeepers working all over the state. Since the County Extension Office is often the first place people contact when they have questions about our buzzing friends, we also met with extension officers to find out how we can better support beekeeping around New Mexico.
- The NMBKA was contracted to work with the US Department of Agriculture and the NM Department of Agriculture to help conduct the 2015 Honeybee Pests and Diseases Sampling Survey—a nationwide effort to find out what diseases, pests and parasites are affecting our hives. We inspected 24 hives around the state, taking samples of live bees, bees in alcohol, and brood chamber debris. This year there was a new added element to the test: our inspectors gathered beeswax for analysis to determine pesticide loads. I was privileged to participate in testing with the Garcia Family, one of the few commercial beekeepers in New Mexico. The Garcias have been keeping bees in the Las Cruces area for three generations, and have seen quite a bit of change in this industry. The information gathered during this survey is vitally important since it will help beekeepers all over the country take better care of our bees.
- As part of the push for Bee City USA designation, NMBKA board member Anita Amstutz and I met with a number of City of Albuquerque department heads. Many city departments are working together to implement Integrative Pest Management solutions. If you live in the Albuquerque area and don't know already know about the "no spray" list, call 311 to request that your property be added. That way it won't be sprayed for mosquitoes, which could potentially harm your backyard beehives.



Kent Huisingsh's honeybees in Alamogordo, NM.

I am looking forward to meeting with the newly formed University of New Mexico Beekeeping Group this week, and to seeing many of you at the NMBKA Annual Conference, February 5-6 at the South Broadway Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

As always, thank you for your continued support of NMBKA and New Mexico's honeybees.

Buzz buzz,

Jessie Brown, President
NM Beekeepers Association
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NEW MEXICO BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

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Sweet Progress

A Health & Wellness Program Teaches Honeybee Husbandry to Rural Nicaraguans

Melanie Kirby

Managua is humid. That, combined with the sudden change from 8300 feet of elevation in Truchas to the near-sea level tropical landscape, came as a shock to my high desert constitution when I arrived there this past September. A few years earlier, I had been contacted by an unusual chef named Vincent Cosgrove who made his living cooking for wealthy families on their yachts. He was looking for beekeeping technical assistance for a rural development program he hoped to start in Central America. Vincent conceived the idea in a taxi in Nicaragua, while stopped at a traffic light. On one side of him was a monstrous Humvee; on the other, a young boy with a donkey cart selling honey. Vincent bought a jar and took a lick. Amazed, he asked the boy where he got the honey. The boy told him that it came from up in the hills, outside the capital city of Managua. Ever the chef, Vincent went to see for himself where this exquisite flavor originated.

Now I was on my way to see in person what Vincent and his wife Victoria had accomplished since then. Victoria is a community educator. She and her



Photo: Melanie Kirby

Members of the Sweet Progress team share a meal

dedicated, knowledgeable *equipo*—a mother and daughter community activist/educator team and an agricultural extensionist—constitute “boots on the ground” for Sweet Progress, the program Vincent started. Sweet Progress promotes health, wellness, and entrepreneurship skills among rural women and youth through beekeeping and other programming such as small animal husbandry, hygienic water and waste practices, and soil remediation.

The morning after I arrived, we visited a youth group at the agricultural college in Tipitapa. Some of the students gathered kindling so that we could light our bee smokers before checking on the Africanized bees in the

apiary behind the school and livestock grounds, where they hold their field practicums. The Nicaraguans have learned how to cope with these insects, but by providing items like woodenware and protective apparel, Sweet Progress has been able to help them go a step further. Now they are learning to manage and steward the Africanized bees—one of the most highly pest- and disease-resistant strains, but also one of the most highly aggressive.

Working with stinging insects is one thing. Working with hyper-intelligent, aggressive stinging insects is another. I was impressed at how well the students worked together, teenage

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2015 NM BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Tom Day treasurer@nmbeekeepers.org

BOARD MEMBERS:

Anita Amstutz memberatlarge1@nmbeekeepers.org
Kent Huisinigh memberatlarge2@nmbeekeepers.org



Make Money from your Beekeeping!

Part Two of Three

PROPOLIS & WAX

Joe Wesbrook

Let's talk about propolis and wax. We've all scraped enough propolis from our hives to glue down anything forever. You'll never scrape all the propolis from your hives, and you certainly don't want to. The bees need it for waterproofing and sealing the hive, and every baby bee gets a tiny bit of propolis to help build the bacteria in their gut. So take the propolis that's easy to scrape—from the tops of frames, and from some joints. What are you going to do with it? Make propolis tincture, of course. Propolis has antibiotic, antioxidant, and antiviral properties. Some studies have shown that propolis builds tooth enamel (I use it as a mouthwash). It's messy and hard to handle, but a one-ounce jar of propolis tincture sells for anywhere from \$10-15. Your main cost comes from the grain alcohol it's mixed with, plus the jars to sell it in. There's also time involved, often several weeks. Small one-ounce or two-ounce bottles with a squeeze dropper are available from Specialty Bottle Company (in Seattle and Nashville) for less than 90 cents each. Grain alcohol is available through most liquor stores for under \$40 for a 1.75 liter bottle (that's just shy of 60 ounces). You don't need organic "food grade" grain or cane alcohol, but you may want to use paper coffee filters to clean your propolis.



Photo: Mike Kruchoski

Recipes for propolis tincture vary. Some make a 5% mixture (one ounce of propolis to 20 ounces of grain alcohol). Some make a 20% tincture; some will go as high as 50%. You've got to have a lot of propolis to hit that 50% mark. 20% is the most common tincture we make, and that seems to be the level our customers prefer. It's lighter in color than the 50%, and doesn't have the "burn" people associate with grain alcohol. You want your propolis to be palatable—it may or may not be pleasant, depending on its strength. Customers aren't buying it for the alcohol; they're buying it for its healing properties. If you do sell propolis at a grower's market or other venues, you should be selling your tincture only to adults. That doesn't

mean you have to ask for ID for every bottle you sell; just be alert. Once you've harvested the propolis and mixed it with the grain alcohol, you'll have to attend to the mixture every day, for at least a couple of weeks. It's not an eight-hour-a-day process, but you will have to spend time "distilling" the propolis into the grain alcohol, and in most cases that means shaking the mixture by hand, for as long a period of time as you can stand. (Nobody said it's easy. It's profitable, but it's not easy.) After a couple of weeks the propolis will dissolve into the grain alcohol, and the alcohol will change color. There's no such thing as "bad" propolis tincture, but "good" tincture will have little if any solids in it (which is where the paper



coffee filters come in) and will have a yellow to caramel cast. A one-ounce bottle of propolis tincture sells at our market for \$10, a two-ounce bottle for \$20. Your costs? Less than a dollar for the bottle, and about 67 cents for an ounce of grain alcohol. Since propolis is really just a byproduct of your bees' work, it is essentially free. Labels for propolis bottles can be made on your computer printer. Total cost per bottle: less than \$2. We sell anywhere from 5-10 one-ounce bottles per week, many to return customers, for sales of \$50-\$100 per week in propolis.

Another thing we've all got lots of is scrap beeswax. There are commercial wax melters, and lots of plans for do-it-yourselfers. Melt it down. It's easier to take care of when it's in one big lump, rather than having buckets of wax sitting around. Plus, by melting your wax, you're helping to prevent the spread of any diseases or wax moth in those old combs. But large pieces of beeswax are a hard sell unless you've got 20, 30, 40 pounds or more, and then the big commercial bee companies like Kelley or Dadant are willing to pay you \$2-4 a pound for your clean, raw wax. Sure, making your own candles is an alternative, but candles take time to make, clean and finish, and they take up table space that I could be using for something that might be a quicker sell. If you're willing to put a bit more work into your wax, lip balms and skin creams are the way to go.

Next time, we'll talk about balm, pollen, and a few other strategies for monetizing your beekeeping!

Joe Wesbrook started beekeeping in Albuquerque, in 1978. He stopped counting stings after the first million.



Photo: John Denne



Driftwatch Reminder

Please visit www.DriftWatch.org to register your apiary site(s). The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) launched this voluntary web-based tool to help pesticide applicators, apiaries, organic commodity producers, and specialty crop growers prevent and/or manage pesticide drift. Registering is free, and it's the first step in opening up communication between pesticide applicators and beekeepers!



Have an idea for an article or feature that you would like to see in the NM Beekeepers Association Newsletter?

Please get in touch!
editor@nmbeekeepers.org



Photo: John Denne



Seeking Nominations for the NM Beekeepers Association Board of Directors

The NM Beekeepers Association is seeking nominations for persons to serve on the 2016 Board of Directors. Positions include: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Members-at-Large. A few of the current board holders are running for their same or different positions, but we need you too!

If you know of someone that you think would be a good candidate, please contact Nikki Mestas, Nominating Committee Chairman, at nbm828@gmail.com, at 505-980-2832, or by mail at 6000 El Prado Rd. NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107.

Please include contact information for both you and your nominee. Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

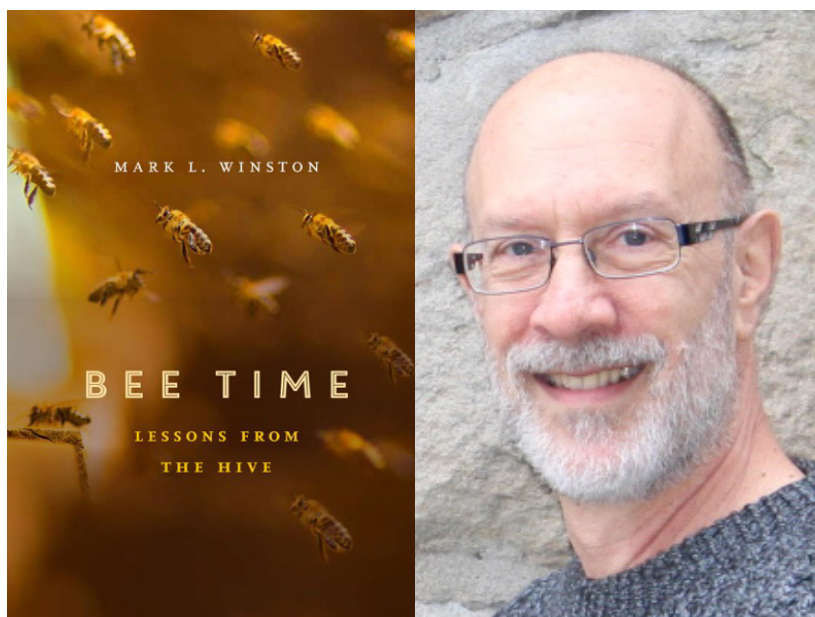


2015 Annual Meeting

February 5-6, 2016

South Broadway Cultural Center
1025 Broadway Blvd SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

SPECIAL GUEST: MARK WINSTON



The New Mexico Beekeepers Association invites you to join us for our 2016 Annual Meeting: **All About the Bees**. Our featured guest speaker will be Mark Winston, award-winning author of *Bee Time: Lessons from the Hive*. We will also be joined by Dr. Stephen Rankin and Dr. Don Hyder, who are doing fascinating research about the potential medicinal uses of local Farmington honey. We will hear from Texas A&M PhD researcher Liz Marsh, ABF Honey Queen Gabrielle Hemesath, and more. You'll also find out more about Bee City USA, and be among the first to learn about the New Mexico Pollinator Plan.

This event will also feature vendors, artisans, information about keeping bees in New Mexico, and the NM Beekeepers Association business meeting. There will be information on plants for pollinators, beginning beekeeping basics, and honey tastings. New hands-on sessions this year include salve making, soap making and pollinator balls.

Admission is free, but we encourage participants to consider joining the New Mexico Beekeepers Association. Family membership is \$30 a year, and can be renewed at

the event. (Or use the MEMBERSHIP FORM on page 7!) We also recommend bringing some cash since we'll be selling NMBKA long-sleeve shirts for working the hives, and bee bumper stickers to stick on your car with pride. Plus we'll be raffling off a quilt, hand made by the incredibly talented Jane Huisingsh.

Questions? secretary@nmbeekeepers.org

Mark L. Winston is that rare individual, a scientist who can speak eloquently to the public. Recognized as the world's leading expert on bees and pollination, Dr. Winston has had a distinguished career researching, teaching, writing and commenting on bees and agriculture, environmental issues and science policy. He was a founding faculty member of the Banff Centre's Science Communication program, and consults widely on utilizing dialogue to develop leadership and communication skills, focus on strategic planning, inspire organizational change, and thoughtfully engage public audiences with controversial issues. He currently is a Professor and Senior Fellow in Simon Fraser University's Centre for Dialogue, and a Professor of Biological Sciences. 



Call out for vendors

Share your goods at the Annual Conference! There is room for 12 vendors, and we would love for you to be one. There's no fee, but we ask that you donate an item for our door prizes. Reserve your spot now at: secretary@nmbeekeepers.org



Bring your Honey!

Bring a small sample of your homegrown honey to our Annual Meeting. Samples will be put on a large map of New Mexico so that everyone can taste our sweet state!



Photo: Michaela O'Brien-Norton



Get Certified!

Starting this spring, a lucky group of beekeepers will be learning best practices from experienced and certified beekeepers in New Mexico. Will you be among them?

The 2016 Certified Beekeepers Apprentice Program will kick off in March, welcoming its third incoming class. CBAP is a two-year program. Level I is classroom-based instruction combined with hands-on practice in the Open Space Bee Yard hives. Curriculum topics cover a complete overview of best practices for running both Langstroth and top-bar hives. Level II, completed during the following spring and summer, is a more self-guided program. Level II certification candidates work independently to plan outings to local bee yards, including Melanie Kirby's Zia Queen Bee Company in Truchas, Kate Whealan's beautiful Santa Fe location, and the many hives of Ken Hays, among others. Level II candidates may also choose from several interesting electives offered over the season, including a class on dealing with varroa mites taught by Megan Mahoney, and how to build a top-bar hive with TJ Carr.

Beekeepers of all levels are encouraged to apply, and applicants are selected through a lottery process. Program fees are only \$250 per year, and applications can be found on the NMBKA website – but the program fills to capacity each year, so be sure to get your application in soon!

A New Beekeeper in Texas


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covers has grown from the original region of Northern California, to the Midwest, Hawaii, Florida, Oregon, and now Texas.

The goals of this program are twofold: to help beekeepers make decisions in their individual businesses, and to reduce colony mortality on a national level by identifying trends on a larger scale. I will be working with commercial beekeepers based in Texas in an attempt to help them make more informed decisions about their operations through sampling, data collection, and reporting information back to them.

Being a member of the Texas Honey Bee Tech Transfer Team means driving all over Texas visiting (pestering!), talking with, and listening to commercial beekeepers wherever I find them. This also means pulling on my mud boots and veil and looking at beehives—and there are lots and lots of beehives in Texas. It is a gigantic state with many diverse regions, and many diverse beekeepers to match. The bee industry in Texas includes a bit of everything, from migratory pollinators, to honey producers to queen breeders. It is an exciting place for bees and I am excited and honored to play a small part in it.

There are many ways for you to contribute to the national database too, including surveys and citizen science projects—even if you are not commercial. If you would like to “Bee Included, Bee Involved, Bee Informed!” then please visit our website, www.beeinformed.org, to find out more about the Bee Informed Partnership. In January, we will also have booths set up at the American Honey Producers meeting in Albuquerque, and the ABF conference in Jacksonville, FL. Please come say hello if you are attending either event!

For me, working with the Bee Informed Partnership was an opportunity that I couldn't turn down. I'm loving Texas, but New Mexico and its bee community have supported me and helped me grow into the beekeeper that I am today. Thank you! I hope to bring back lots more stories and knowledge when I come home for that green chile. 



THE ART OF THE CUT-OUT

PART TWO IN A SERIES

Mike Kruchoski

In Part One of this series, we learned why three local beekeepers do cut-outs. Not surprisingly, they shared several common goals. Foremost in their minds was a desire to “save the bees” while educating homeowners about the importance of bees. In this article, we’ll hear how they work with homeowners to ensure the best outcome.

I asked NMBKA members Tyler Schutte (www.nmbeeremoval.com) and Ray Espinoza (www.antiguasdelnorte.com) what three things they want home and business owners to know about bee removals. Just as they share similar reasons for doing cut-outs, they also take similar approaches in their initial talks with potential clients. Again, educating the general public is an important consideration.

Ray always starts by helping clients understand the full range of their options. Alternatives to an intrusive cut-out include the less known trap-out and the all-too-common “pest” extermination. Each has an obvious, immediate cost, but there are less obvious, long-term implications, too. So, Ray works with the owner to compare the pros and cons. Managing client expectations is a key concern. By clearly and objectively explaining clients’ options, the



All Photos: Mike Kruchoski





professional beekeeper can instill confidence in the owner that a cut-out is usually the best choice all-around.

If needed, discussion of clients' options can occasionally go into great detail. For example, in talking about outright extermination – which I call “Poison-in-Place” – we might compare the costs and effectiveness of commercial pest control services versus the inexpensive “do it yourself”


Both Ray and Tyler go into great detail about their process. Tyler begins by telling the client what's happening inside the wall. He estimates the free space available to the bee colony and the extent of their infestation. This can help dispel the myth that a two-dollar can of wasp spray will take care of the problem. Because owners don't understand what's inside their structure, Tyler often shows them

pictures from previous removals. Once they see those pictures, they no longer think bee removal is as easy as knocking down a wasp nest outdoors, and generally feel more comfortable about paying the fee he charges.

After describing the challenging work involved in cutting walls and removing honeycomb and bees, Ray and Tyler explain what their clients should expect over the few days afterward. Clients rarely have an accurate idea of how many bees are residing inside their structure. They don't realize that a sizable field force (foragers) will become “stragglers,” returning that first evening after the cut-out is done. Tyler advises that robber bees from nearby colonies might visit for leftover comb and honey, so that clients don't begin wondering whether they had made the right choice. By explaining what will

happen and why, professional beekeepers reassure clients that they really know what they're doing and are working in everyone's best interests.

Because Ray and Tyler charge for professional services, they fully explain their contracts before beginning a job. They tell customers to expect follow-up visits for inspecting the aftermath, removing any stragglers, answering any questions or concerns, and discussing proper repairs. Although Ray doesn't do those final repairs, he's prepared to make referrals or arrange repairs. Occasionally he'll make a temporary repair for customers who are waiting to schedule their own final repairs. On the other hand, Tyler's contract includes the proper repairs needed to prevent “reoccupation” of that desirable real estate. Both Ray and Tyler offer guarantees of their work.

Next time, we'll hear some stories about the biggest challenges and frustrations beekeepers encounter while providing this valuable service. 

approach. My survey of local pest control businesses last summer showed that even the simplest of visits can easily cost \$100 to \$200. Besides the obvious up-front cost, there can be long term problems caused by simply leaving dead bees (with their yummy honey and comb) inside a wall or ceiling. These might include attracting other pests, growing nasty molds, and promoting dry rot, as well as allowing future re-infestation by nearby swarms if the structure is not properly repaired.

Sometimes it's worth discussing a fourth option – simply letting the bees be – when the bees' presence doesn't harm neighbors, pets, or structures. This might be an attractive solution for homeowner gardeners who appreciate the pollination by a colony living inside their cinderblock wall. In that case, judicious repair of crumbling mortar could redirect the bees' flight path away from fearful neighbors' yards or a busy sidewalk.





Sweet Progress

Continued from page 3

were offering the bees some supplemental feed since there was little bloom available due to the weather. (September is usually the height of the rainy season, but many Central American countries have been experiencing drought.)

Later I encountered the Africanized bees' opposite: stingless bees. These little beauties hover ever so lightly and make their homes in little pocket knots of trees and stumps. Their entrance port looked like a sea anemone tube, though made of delicate wax. Inside, they layer their comb like a pancake and have several princesses instead of a sole queen. They make little wax gourd pots in which they store their medicinal honey, highly prized by many Nicaraguans.

We visited a women's group closer to the capital, where the women showed me their growing plots with pollina-

tor-friendly flowers and fruit-bearing trees and vines. The women were struggling to diversify their incomes, so Sweet Progress was teaching them beekeeping and gardening. They were in the process of clearing a spot for their group apiary. In a tree-filled copse, they pointed out honeybees that were living in the ground. I was astonished, as I had never encountered honeybees living down so low and in the earth. During another stop, at a school for mentally impaired children, a young boy showed us a wild hive he had discovered, magnificently perched up in the tree canopy. Sweet Progress has been networking with other NGOs, educational institutions and agricultural technicians to continue developing its diverse programming. Meanwhile, Vincent has already made connections globally for marketing the products that the Sweet Progress participants produce. This will help to generate income for the participants and also give them the ability to share the flavors and culture of their tropical landscape,

all while building a brighter future through beekeeping.

For more information about Sweet Progress, visit www.SweetProgress.org

A native New Mexican, Melanie Kirby has been keeping bees professionally for 19 years. She also serves as an international consultant on sustainable beekeeping management and queen honeybee breeding. She is honored to serve as an advocate for pollinators and to work with farmers to grow healthy food for our diverse communities and landscapes. Email: ziaqueenbees@hotmail.com 



Photo: Melanie Kirby

Entrance port to tree hive



NM Beekeepers Association Invites Grant Applications

The New Mexico Beekeepers Association's Grant Program seeks to assist individuals and organizations whose work can better the beekeeping industry in New Mexico and can help raise public consciousness toward the importance and rewards of beekeeping. For details about what types of projects are funded, and how to apply, please visit our website at <http://nmbeekeepers.org>



Membership Form

Join us!

Members receive perks like free admission to events, website listings and newsletters!

December 2015



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CONTACT INFORMATION (PRIVATE)

NAME

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EMAIL

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

☐

FULL YEAR
\$30

☐

JANUARY-NOVEMBER
\$15

NEWSLETTER

☐

EMAIL
FREE

☐

JANUARY-NOVEMBER
\$5 PER YEAR

NMBKA MEMBERS CAN ADVERTISE FOR FREE!

if you wish to have your information added to the Bee Services section of our website, please fill out this section:

NAME OR COMPANY

PHONE

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WEBSITE

CITY OR AREA

List for swarm capture? ☐ YES ☐ NO

List as bee educator? ☐ YES ☐ NO

List for selling honey? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you sell queens or bees? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you sell wax/pollen/propolis? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you sell hive equipment? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, what kind?

MAIL COMPLETED FORM AND PAYMENT TO:

NM Beekeepers Association
PO Box 7188
Albuquerque, NM 87194

MAKE CHECKS OUT TO:

NM Beekeepers Association

Questions? Email: info@nmbeekeepers.org



Seeking Historical Bee Images

Was your great grandfather, grandmother or uncle a beekeeper? Were they caught on film?

We are looking for beekeeping pictures from the past. We would love to see your photos, so that we can start building up a collection at the Albuquerque Museum Photo Archives. Please share your pictures with Konnie Nelson, klboardman64@gmail.com



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